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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANBARIS RAISE CONCERNS OVER KARBALA BOUNDARY
DISPUTE WITH THE AMBASSADOR

REF: A) 07 BAGHDAD 4192 B) 07 BAGHDAD 4224 C) BAGHDAD
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Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: At a January 20 meeting in Ramadi, Anbar Governor Ma'amoun Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, the leader of the "Iraq Awakening Movement," and several other local notables raised their concerns with the Ambassador over putative Shi'a attempts on Anbar's southern boundary. Ma'amoun asked USG assistance to block any such move. The Ambassador told Ma'amoun that the boundary was an important issue that needs to be resolved peacefully. The Governor also requested that the Ambassador help convince the Ministers of Oil and Transportation to visit Anbar and discuss plans to restart the K-3 oil refinery in Haditha. Sheikh Ahmad thanked the Ambassador for U.S. support in the passage of de-Ba'athification legislation. End Summary.

Boundary Issue

[1](#)3. (C) On January 20 the Ambassador met with Anbar Governor Sami Rasheed Ma'amoun, Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, leader of the "Iraq Awakening Movement," or Sahawa Al-Iraq (SAI), and several other Anbari sheikhs in Ramadi, in a discussion dominated by Anbari concerns over attempts by Shi'a politicians to transfer a swath of southern Anbar to Karbala Province through the Article 140 process.

[1](#)4. (C) Governor Ma'amoun asked U.S. help to block any such attempt, and invited the Ambassador to visit Nukhayb, the largest town in the disputed area, and one with a large Shi'a population that lives in peace with its Sunni neighbors. He offered to hold a special meeting of the Provincial Council in Nukhayb and invited the Ambassador's attendance. Ma'amoun, echoed by Sheikh Ahmad, said the Anbaris are united in their opposition to any boundary change. Ma'amoun argued that Anbar's successful handling of security of the hajj routes last month, in stark contrast to the previous year's experience, proved that Anbaris were capable of administering the area.

[1](#)5. (C) Ma'amoun complained that police from Karbala and other Shi'a provinces have encroached upon Anbar's jurisdiction in an attempt to establish a presence at the Arar crossing on the Saudi border. This has resulted in a number of standoffs with Anbari police. The encroachments were rebuffed, Ma'amoun said. "People are instigating a confrontation," he added. Sheikh Ahmad observed that the tribes are determined to defend Nukhayb; "We will not allow anyone to remove Nukhayb from Anbar."

[1](#)6. (C) The Ambassador told Ma'amoun that the boundary issue was important and must be resolved peacefully, adding that violence is exactly what Al-Qaeda wants. He added that

Article 140 issues and the status of Nukhayb -- along with that of other disputed regions -- will be a significant issue in 2008, and that the U.S. and UN will be involved in the process. The Ambassador told Ma'amoun that he had met with the Special Representative of the Secretary General to discuss ways to approach Article 140 issues.

Restarting the Haditha Oil Refinery

¶17. (C) Turning to economic development, Ma'amoun asked the Ambassador's help prodding the GOI to re-start the K-3 oil refinery in Haditha. Ma'amoun said he has so far been unsuccessful in his attempts to bring the Ministers of Oil and Transportation to Anbar to discuss K-3. The Transportation Minister's involvement would be needed to reach consensus on whether to supply K-3 with crude by truck or rail. "We have knocked on every door and have not been successful, so now we are knocking on your door," he told the Ambassador. Ma'amoun also requested U.S. support for establishing Free Trade Zones in Anbar, and for recruiting foreign investment to develop the Akkas gas field near Husaybah. Ma'amoun noted that he had met DPM Barham Saleh in Baghdad a few days earlier to discuss power plants, but offered scant detail on the discussion.

Thanks for Support on Tempering De-Ba'athification

¶18. (C) Sheikh Ahmad thanked the Ambassador for U.S. support for the passage of legislation tempering the de-Ba'athification process. Ahmad, who served in the Iraqi Army, said many Anbari men were officers who fought in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. Many of them feel they are being

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punished for defending the country against Iran, simply because they had leadership positions in the military. The revised de-Ba'athification process will help to avoid punishing those who served their country but committed no crimes, Ahmad said.

Anbar's Place in History

¶19. (C) The Ambassador emphasized U.S. admiration for the accomplishments of the Anbaris -- particularly their effort to improve security. "History will show that the beginning of the end of Al-Qaeda started in Anbar," he said. The Ambassador added that improved security means that Anbar can concentrate on economic development, and that the U.S. will support Anbar in this effort. He congratulated the Anbaris on establishing the Anbar Higher Committee, a group of six Anbari leaders from across the political and tribal spectrum, designed as a consensus-seeking body to coordinate leadership decisions (Reftels).
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